

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Key-Stroke One released too soon

A new program called Key-Stroke One is an excellent example of how disastrous it can be to buy a new, untested program. Despite problems galore, and despite the fact that its intended range of capabilities is rather limited, the publishers have the audacity to call it "the complete computer management system."

Palm Beach Technologies of North Miami Beach, Fla., apparently tried to develop several good, potentially useful concepts and to package them together in one product called Key-Stroke One. But it doesn't come through. To understand how the software fails to keep advertised promises, let's start by examining the program's claims and key features.

First, Key-Stroke One is supposed to allow you access to your programs without having to use

normal DOS commands. After setting up "menus" that show all your alternatives, pressing just one pre-defined key will load your programs for you — hence the name, Key-Stroke One.

Second, a feature is included that loads a program or function at preset times and dates in the future. This could be useful for automatically backing up your data at the end of a day or reminding you to do a task you tend to forget.

Third, it has a built-in "screen saver," which is designed to prevent your CRT from ghosting due to phosphor burning. The program will supposedly turn your screen off within 60 seconds if there isn't any activity. You can get the screen back by hitting any key.

Sound good? Well, hold on to your wallets. Here's what I discov-

ered while trying each function:

✓ It's difficult to give your programs and files a number on Key-Stroke One's main menu. You can't just go to the number you want to define. You must, instead, go through a zillion prompts for each number, beginning from the first and, continuing until you arrive at the number you're after. Using DOS autoexec batch files to do the same functions is easier.

✓ The scheduler will automatically execute a program at the preset time and date. However, if you are in the middle of another application at that time, nothing happens! The scheduler won't prompt you with a message that it's time to execute the preset program you wanted so badly. And even after you finish with your current task, nothing happens. Your scheduled command is completely lost.

✓ The automatic screen saver sometimes worked properly and sometimes didn't. Instead of shutting off the screen after 60 seconds, as advertised, it sometimes went

off after 10 seconds, 27 seconds or some other random number. It turned out to be a nuisance. There's no way to adjust the frequency, and when you hit a key to get your screen back, you get an invalid-command prompt before the screen is returned.

According to Palm Beach Technologies, a new update is in the works that supposedly will correct many of the problems I've mentioned. But they've already lost my confidence by issuing such a poor version in the first place. Premature releases such as this one give software publishers a bad name.

The bottom line: Even if it worked, Key-Stroke One is terribly overpriced at \$89.95. But I wouldn't use it even if they paid me that much to do so.

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